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ABSTRACT

In the next century there will be a critical need for diverse groups of people to have positive social relationships and share diminishing resources. The movement toward equality involves more than passing laws that mandate equality; it involves the restructuring of primitive beliefs within individuals and whole communities. Experience-based training integrates the existing knowledge base about human learning patterns and social interaction with the perspective of the individual to create a powerful climate for personal growth and behavioral change. In the 21st century, this critical resource may provide the missing link between understanding human behavior and acting upon that knowledge. Experiential education is an especially powerful method for individual growth and social change because it is holistic. Not only are intellectual challenges involved, but experiential education also provides people with practice in dealing with the psychoemotional aspects of fear, risk, and disequilibrium, as well as the joy and excitement of mastery. In experience-based training, this all occurs in a safe, supportive social environment. The "Awareness Stretch" is a simple model that can guide personal assessment of intercultural competence. As in similar typologies, there is a progression from denial to acceptance of difference. However, the Awareness Stretch continues on to levels of adapting and competence, where institutional and inculturated structures and behaviors are challenged. These final stages of growth pave the way for real social change. (SV)

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Intercultural Competence Through Experience Based Training.

John Foster

A critical need in the next century will be the abilities of diverse groups of people to have positive social relationships and share diminishing resources. Sensitivity to cultural differences, competence in skills which allow intercultural respect and communication, and the dynamics of human social interaction are well suited to experience-based training, using initiatives and team building activities. This workshop presents a model of intercultural understanding which participants will follow as they expand their awareness of factors influencing intercultural relationships such as primitive belief structures, power, and human growth patterns; all through experience-based training activities. Participants need only bring their willingness to explore personal beliefs during the process of the workshop and a desire to learn more about the dynamics which perpetuate unjust social practices.

Day: **Friday**
Time: **8:30**

Expanded Description

There is an ever increasing movement in the United States for equality; from the founding of the country and the signing of the Constitution, through the Civil War, and to more recent Constitutional amendments such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. This process is more than simply passing laws which mandate equality, as anyone might know; but more importantly, it involves the restructuring of primitive beliefs within individuals and whole communities. One can assume that many of the dynamics involved in institutional change, human learning patterns, and social interaction are fairly well understood and even accepted as truth, since they are often repeated and used in formal training and education situations. It is one thing to understand these dynamics, however, and quite another to actually behave in ways that demonstrate justice and respect to others. It is in this critical juncture that experience-based training provides hope and practical gains toward the improvement of the human existence. Experience-based training incorporates the content knowledge base of human interaction with individual perspective to create a powerful climate for personal growth and behavioral change. As the world moves into the 21 st Century this critical resource may provide the missing link between understanding human behavior and acting upon that knowledge

Workshop Format

This workshop calls upon many strategies to create an effective presentation which provides new information to participants and incorporates the valuable resources each person brings to the session. Participants are involved in a series of problem solving initiatives, team building activities, group discussions, and lecturettes during this high paced, three hour workshop. Specific activities will be selected at the time of the workshop depending upon the interests, styles, abilities, and previous experiences of the participants. There is a dual purpose to the workshop: 1.) To demonstrate a unique synthesis of intercultural dynamics information and experience-based training methodology; and 2.) To provide participants with an opportunity to assess their own intercultural competence with one or more different cultures; and become more fluent in the issues affecting greater social justice.

Learning Objectives

1.) Participants should gain a better understanding of how standard initiative and team building activities can be adapted to the specific content of intercultural dynamics.
2.) Participants should develop a personal awareness of their intercultural competence using the Awareness Stretch model provided (Luna & Salas-Miller, 1992).
3.) Participants should gain a greater understanding of the dynamics involved in social change (e.g. human psychological, social, and philosophical elements; human institutions), including a better understanding of their own cultural awareness.
4.) Participants should gain a greater understanding of the use of experience-based activities in training situations.

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General Outline

1.) The creation of a micro-community & documentation of the process.
-team building exercises (Foster, 1993) following a group formation model (Levine, 1974).
-establish shared group experience as basis for introduction of the *Awareness Stretch* (Luna & Salas-Miller, 1994).

2.) Introduction of the *Awareness* Stretch & definition of intercultural competence.
-reflection on the micro-community with regard to the model. (i.e. what caused us to act as we just did?)
-demonstration/participation in activities (Foster, 1993) to demonstrate the model further.

3.) Factors influencing intercultural competence & their relation to experiential education. -human dynamics discussion/lecturette; depending on participant strengths & needs.
(i.e. how do people learn, grow, change?)
-value of experience-based training methods with regard to human dynamics.
(i.e. how can we support learning, growing, & changing?)
-demonstration/participation in activities (Foster, 1993) with specific learning objectives on human interaction.

4.) Personal reflection & goal setting based on new information and revelations of the workshop.

Basis & Background

Experience-based training & human dynamics

Human growth is multidimensional. According to Aristotle, it occurs in five domains: physical, psycho-emotional, social, intellectual/academic, ethical; but any change faced by an individual affects all five domains (Loomis, 1943). Growth can sometimes occur with minimum impact, and sometimes require tremendous amounts of time, energy, and resources, depending upon the parameters of a person's schema. Schemas or "world views" identify what is valuable and possible from an individual's perspective (Piaget, 1952). These views can either be maintained in the face of change by assimilating new information into what is already understood; or they must be changed to accommodate the fact that new information does not fit with what is understood. Accommodation is more difficult because it requires disequilibrium, which requires skill and experience in coping with feelings because it involves fear. In fact, many people will filter or reject information to maintain their schema rather than face the uncertainty and risk associated with changing basic beliefs in their schema.

In American pop culture, it seems that people are "allowed" to deal with growth on some levels, but not on others, which creates a difficult context to resolve complex issues such as intercultural competence. The following statement is an appropriate summary of what is necessary if real change is to occur:

Real change whether desired or not, whether imposed or voluntarily pursued, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty and if the change works out, it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment, and professional growth. The anxieties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are central to... change success or failure (Fullan, 1982).

In this light experiential education, in the tradition of Kurt Hahn, is an especially powerful method for individual growth and social change because it is holistic (Thomas, 1990). Not only are intellectual challenges involved, but experiential education provides people with practice in dealing with the psycho-emotional aspects of fear, risk, and disequilibrium; as well as the joy, excitement, and celebration of mastery. In experience-based training, this all occurs while in a safe, supportive social environment. As individuals gain competence in the disequilibrium of fear in a training environment where simulations and models provide perceived risk, they become more prepared to deal with actual risk, which in fact may only be a perception after all. Through these facilitated experiences growth becomes a new behavior for the participants which can be transferred to more challenging situations in the future (Gass, 1985).

One paradox of human behavior is that despite fear, organisms tend to grow toward health (function) and away from harm (dysfunction) to the extent that a person will actually resist inculturalization in order to become actualized (Maslow, 1962). For example: a women who resists a long standing family

tradition of staying home to prepare the dinner meal every night by taking on a business career despite the fact that her mother will no longer talk to her because she is not fulfilling her family obligations .

According to Maslow, there is a developmental pathway to growth that begins with self awareness; then in trusting others, then in taking risks. Without satisfaction in the primary levels of need, the higher levels cannot be fulfilled, therefore people tend to seek out opportunities to fulfill their needs at the primary levels so they may be free to pursue the higher needs. Experiential education allows for this process to occur readily, and in fact, sometimes provides greater opportunities for individuals to achieve higher levels, which accounts for the high levels of motivation most participants exhibit in well-run experience-based training programs.

It is also helpful to understand the cognitive basis for learning as it becomes more clear what is needed for real growth to occur. Recent findings in psychology confirm the assumptions made in experiential education that learning (growth) requires the unique perspective of the learner to be effective. In other words, there is no singular, "best way" to teach which will work for everyone. The theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1991) supports this philosophy with strong research and a new model of human intelligence which allows for more than one way to be "smart" depending upon many different factors, such as genetics and cultural upbringing.

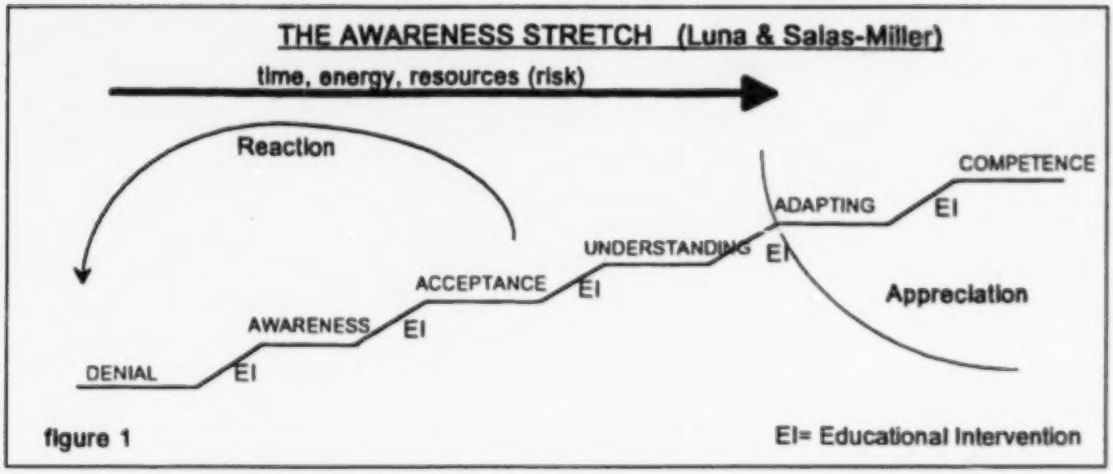
Intercultural competence

When dealing with intercultural growth, it is important to understand the foundations which support the dysfunctional social behaviors which exist across many cultures. Primitive beliefs are the coping strategies that people learn from their primary group of significance (Rokeach, 1960) through modeling; and are always buried beneath the logical existence of adults. The process of inculcation (in-group/out-group training) which all people experience is natural to perpetuate children's safety, therefore the continuation of the family. That is: things that are different or strange are dangerous (e.g. "don't take candy from strangers"); while things that are similar or familiar are safe.

The instinctive process of inculcation; unfortunately can lead to ethnocentrism, which in turn leads individuals to fear other groups, sometimes resulting in prejudice. This is an immature *reaction* to difference versus a mature *response* to difference, which is quite simply "intellectual laziness" (Luna, 1994). Intercultural competence can only occur when individuals move beyond the absolutism of their primitive beliefs into a relativism stance which allows for individual choice and peaceful coexistence of different points of view (Perry, 1981). This commitment to individual choice is one of the strands that ties experiential education strongly to intercultural issues.

Recognizing differences in both the sources and the manifestations of culture is useful to establish a frame of reference for the Awareness *Stretch* model of intercultural competence which is introduced below. Culture can be described as a person's schema passed on by her primary group of influence, which describes how she should interact with herself, other, and the world. These Schemas can be molded by different ethnic groups within a society which are classified as dominant (macro) molders and specific (micro) molders (Luna, 1994).

Within each societal molder there are five areas of influence: language, religion, customs & traditions, institutions, and economics. The closer one's specific molders match with the dominant molders of his context, the greater his chance for success in that context (Luna, 1994). Therefore, fluency in the five categories of various societal molders enables one to have greater intercultural competence. Within each ethnic group, there are myriad combinations of influence from the dominant and specific molders the individual has experienced which affect the manner in which the individual interacts with others within and outside of his own ethnic group. These differences can be viewed in a typology with six stages: 1.) ethnic psychological captivity; 2.) ethnic encapsulation; 3.) ethnic identity clarification; 4.) biethnicity; 5.) multiethnicity and reflective nationalism; 6.) globalism and global competency (Banks, 1981).



The *Awareness Stretch* (figure 1) is a simple model which can be used as a guide for individuals for a personal assessment of intercultural competence. As in the Banks Typology and the Perry Scheme, there is a similar progression from denial of difference to acceptance of difference; however in the *Awareness Stretch,* behavioral indicators are provided to assist in identifying where on the continuum a person is located. As a person climbs to new plateaus on the stretch, there is always the threat of a return to previous levels due to fear, especially in situations where a person perceives a risk to her power. Until individuals reach levels of *adapting* and *competence,* where institutional and inculturated structures and behaviors are challenged, there is no real change in status for an oppressed culture. In these final stages of growth, a sense of appreciation of difference is achieved which paves the way for real change based on the true nature of a" fully functioning human being" (Roybal Rose, 1994).

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